

# He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

African American Spritual

The musical score is written on four staves in 4/4 time, featuring a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody is as follows:  
Staff 1: He's got the whole world in his hands, (Chord: F)  
Staff 2: He's got the whole world in his hands, (Chord: C7)  
Staff 3: He's got the whole world in his hands, (Chord: F)  
Staff 4: He's got the whole world in his hands. (Chords: C7 and F)

2. He's got the wind and rain in his hands, (3times)  
He's got the whole world in his hands.
3. He's got you and me, brother, in his hands,  
He's got you and me sister, in his hands,  
He's got you and me brother, in his hands,  
He's got the whole world in his hands.
4. He's got the tiny little baby in his hands, (3 times)  
He's got the whole world in his hands.
5. He's got ev'rybody in his hands, (3 times)  
He's got the whole world in his hands.

## SINGING

Help students recognize the form of this song as they sing. Which two lines (or phrases) are identical? (1 and 3) Call them *a*. The second phrase is different. Call that one *b*. The fourth phrase is different from all the others. Call that one *c* and describe the overall form as *a b a c*. The form and harmonic structure of this song make it a partner song that can be sung with many other songs in the same pattern such as *Skip to My Lou*, *Sandy Land* and *Bow Belinda*. When combining it with those songs, make sure that the first three notes (*He's got the*) are sung before joining other songs on the downbeat.

## PLAYING

Strum the autoharp in an accompaniment pattern with either two or four strums per measure using these chords. This example utilizes four strums per measure (one for each beat).

4	F		F		F		C7		C7		F		F		C7		F	
4																		
	He's got the		whole...		in...		whole...		in...		whole...		in...		whole...		hands	

Before the song begins, establish the beat by strumming two measures (8 beats). In the case of this song which begins on the upbeat, there is only enough time for seven strums after which the singing starts on the last half of that beat. Notice that the last measure only has three strums (or beats) because the next verse starts again on the last count (also called the pickup or upbeat).

## CREATING

Have students create other words for additional verses. Let them sing the words and teach them to the class.

## LISTENING

Have someone play a non-pitched instrument on the words *whole world* each time they occur in verse one. Experiment with various sounds and evaluate their effectiveness in conveying the significance of the words. Is a large cymbal, a large drum or a gong a better sound because it last the length of the words than a wood block or maracas? Do the same with succeeding verses.

## CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

Based on spirituals, two styles of music have developed: gospel and soul. This song takes on the gospel style with the addition of hand clapping and tambourine playing. The study of both these styles could be an interesting pursuit because they have a great impact on our current popular music.

As a language arts experience, ask the students how many syllables are in the word *world*. Is it hyphenated? As a one syllable word, technically *world* would receive only one sound on a non-pitched instrument as suggested in the LISTENING paragraph. This word resembles the word *fire* which also has only one syllable that frequently slurs into two. Can students find other similar words?

### **He's Got the Whole World in His Hands**